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ART. II.—*Critick of Pure Reason ; translated from the Original of IMMANUEL KANT.* London : William Pickering. 1838. 8vo. pp. 655.

WE cannot believe, that it is possible to translate the writings of Kant, in a way that will make them intelligible to the English reader, however conversant he may be with ordinary metaphysical speculations, and little apt to be discouraged by the first sight of abstruse doctrine and uncouth phraseology. A compend, or general exposition of his system, may be attempted with some chance of success ; but a literal version would probably be ten times more enigmatical than the original. The fact is, that Kant needs to be translated before he can be understood by the vast majority of his own countrymen ; and though the eminent thinkers, who have stooped to this repulsive task in Germany, have succeeded in disentangling the main points of his system, and presenting to the popular view something like a connected whole, yet in the subsidiary portions, the filling up of the theory, a comparison of their respective works displays a mass of various and irreconcilable opinions. Kant aspired to invent a new science, and a new nomenclature for it, at the same time. Each is explicable only through the other ; and the student is, consequently, presented at the outset with an alternative of difficulties. The system can be comprehended only by one who is acquainted with its technical vocabulary, and a knowledge of the terms employed can be derived only from a previous familiarity with the principal doctrines and divisions of the theory itself. The case, therefore, is very nearly as bad as that of the Egyptian hieroglyphics,—the unknown writing of an unknown tongue. Fichte seems to have had this fact in view, when he affirmed, that the works of his predecessor must be wholly unintelligible to those who did not know beforehand what they contained.

Other obstacles to the easy comprehension of Kantian metaphysics arise from defects of style, and the writer's inability, acknowledged by himself, to facilitate the study of his opinions by the clearness of their expression. The rambling and involved sentences, running on from page to page, and stuffed with repetitions and parenthetical matter, would frighten away any but the most determined student, at

the very threshold of his endeavour. Kant was an acute logician, a systematic, profound, and original thinker ; but his power of argument and conception wholly outran his command over the resources of language, and he was reduced to the use of words as symbols, in which his opinions were rather darkly implied, than openly enunciated. The very extent of his innovations in the vocabulary of science showed his inability to make a proper use of the ancient stores of his native tongue. The coining of new terms is the unfailing expedient of those, who cannot make a right application of old ones. The difficulties thus thrown in the student's way, are still further enhanced by the absolute dryness of the speculations, and the want of any relief from ingenious illustrations, or excursions into the flowery regions of eloquence and imagination. His genius never unbends. The flowers, with which other philosophers have strewed the path of their inquiries, were either beyond his reach, or he disdained to employ them ; and his writings accordingly appear an arid waste of abstract discussions, from which the taste instinctively recoils. Not one oasis blooms, not a single floweret springs, beside the path of the traveller, through this African desert of metaphysics. In this respect, how unlike the rich and fervid genius of Bacon, whose solemn and weighty teachings derive half their effect from the play of imagination, and brilliancy of wit, in which they are enveloped !

Before the system of Kant can become generally known, or rightly appreciated, out of the small circle of scholars, who, in France and Germany, have resolutely grappled with its difficulties, the same service must be performed for him, which the generous and clear-headed Dumont afforded to his English contemporary, Bentham. It is not enough merely to translate ; the order of subjects must be changed, the course of argument and illustration arranged anew, and the whole work rewritten. The success of previous attempts at a close interpretation has not been such as to tempt further endeavour. The Latin version of Born, though executed under the eye of Kant himself, is not half so intelligible as the original. Indeed, the limited vocabulary of the Latin language formed an insuperable obstacle to the undertaking, though a vigorous attempt was made to conquer the difficulty by the introduction of barbarisms, that would have made "Quintilian stare and gasp." Should another scholar meditate a version into

one of the ancient languages, we recommend to him to try the Greek, feeling quite confident, that, in such a case, he will at least equal in perspicuity some of the renowned fathers of Grecian philosophy. Futile as was this attempt to give universal reputation to the writings of Kant by translating them into the language of the learned world, the few writers, who, in France and England, have endeavoured to make the same works known in their vernacular tongue, have met, if possible, with still less success. In the latter country, indeed, little has been tried, and nothing effected. Among the countrymen of Locke, Hume, and Reid, the taste for metaphysical speculations has gradually died out ; while they could not foster a philosophy of native growth, there was little chance of obtaining favor for an importation from Germany. Willich, a respectable German scholar, published a volume, entitled “Elements of the Critical Philosophy” ; but it hardly deserved the name of an introduction to these elements. A few pages of the work on “Pure Reason” are literally translated, and an unsuccessful effort is made to explain a few of the most difficult terms in the Kantian vocabulary. Wirgman, in some essays published in the “Encyclopædia Londinensis,” made greater pretensions, but supported them with far less ability. The introductory portion of the “Critique” is rendered into English with tolerable fidelity ; but the original matter in the “Essays” only shows, that the writer was a weak and vain man, wholly unfitted for the task of comment and exposition. Before printing his work, he submitted it to Dugald Stewart, with the amiable intention of preventing that philosopher from wasting further labor on his inquiry into the faculties of the human mind, after he had been entirely forestalled by his German rival. When the Scottish sage returned the manuscript, with a coldly polite refusal of the proffered assistance, Wirgman, as if eager with Dogberry to write himself down an ass, had the folly to publish the correspondence. His lamentations upon such blind perversity on the part of Stewart and others make up the larger portion of the trash, with which he has enveloped his imperfect and jejune translation.

“They order these matters better in France.” Of all living writers, perhaps, Cousin is best qualified for the task of interpreting and making available to common minds the dark sayings of the philosopher of Königsberg. His thorough acquaintance with the subject, attested by a copious in-

fusion of Kantianism into his own philosophical system,—the candor, learning, and ability, with which he has reviewed the labors of others,—and the admirable clearness of his style, are qualities, that would insure him a great measure of success in the undertaking. He has long since promised to the world an exposition of Kant, and we would gladly see the pledge redeemed, though at the expense of sacrificing some of the fruits of his original speculations. The necessity for such a work is not removed by the labors of some of his countrymen, who have preceded him in the same field, though they have done much to elucidate the subject, and to give a new direction to their own philosophical inquiries. The publication of Villers is the most important, in which, giving up all attempts at a literal version, he goes over the ground in his own way with great distinctness, though he sometimes unwittingly engrafts his own opinions upon those which he seeks to interpret. In an admirable sketch, published in the *Biographie Universelle*, Stäfer has given a lucid and succinct account of the Kantian system, leaving nothing to be desired by those, who wish only for a general view of its scope and leading peculiarities.

Those, who think the difficulties of the German language are the only obstacle to the right comprehension of Kant, may satisfy themselves by examining the volume, of which the title stands at the head of our article. The great work, containing the whole system of the Critical Philosophy, is here faithfully translated, sentence for sentence, and,—as far as the different nature of the two languages would permit,—word for word. The writer of it has thus ably executed the only task that he proposed to himself. The violations of English idiom are frequent, it is true, but no more so than was absolutely necessary in order to preserve the strictness of the original plan. And, while the object was merely to translate, not to rewrite and interpret, we are not sure, but that the wisest course was to follow this method in all its severity. A freer version might give false notions of the original, while the only fault of the present volume must be, that, for the most part, it gives no notions at all. A false light is worse than utter darkness. A dreary task must the translator have had of it; though we would rather engage in an undertaking like his, than in that of the student, who, without further aid than this work affords, should attempt to

master the thorny system of Kantian metaphysics. The book presents a more accurate image of its prototype, than it would do, if executed on a more liberal plan, and with greater attention to rhetorical embellishment. The English style, harsh, awkward, and involved as it appears, is a fair picture of the original diction ; though the former is necessarily the more obscure, because, in German, far more frequently than in English, the composition of the technical terms indicates the precise shade of meaning attached to them. We have noticed a few wrong translations ; but they are unimportant, and do not lessen the credit due to the translator for having executed a most repulsive work with remarkable care, patience, and fidelity.

But the question will surely be asked, Why spend so much labor on the interpretation of opinions, which the author has not cared, or has not been able, to make intelligible himself, and of which no practical application is possible ? What hidden wisdom is there in the writings of Kant, to extract which the learned world must toil as painfully, as they have done in deciphering the hieroglyphics of Egypt, and perhaps to as little purpose ? Why not leave his system in that obscurity, in which his uncouth style and barbarous nomenclature first enveloped it ? We cannot be satisfied with the answer of the men who maintain, that the difficulties of this metaphysical theory do not arise from any defects in the exposition of it, but are fairly attributable to the ignorance, the want of acuteness, or the defective power of abstraction of those, who have tried in vain to comprehend it. The reproach is an infrequent one in the history of the higher philosophy. Why have not other writers on the same subject been exposed to it in an equal degree ? The difficulty of reading a work on the higher mathematics is a different thing, for we know precisely in what it consists. No one complains of the obscurity of the *Mécanique Céleste*, though very few would attempt to peruse it in its primitive form with much chance of success. None but a mathematician of very respectable attainments would ever dream of such a task. It is well known, that La Place, addressing himself to a small circle of scientific men, wrote with the conciseness, which the comprehensiveness of his subject demanded, and that the difficulty of understanding his work proceeds mainly from this cause, and may be in great part removed by such a commentary as that furnished by our

distinguished countryman. But there is no intrinsic difficulty in the subject of metaphysics, to be removed only by a regular course of previous training and information. Except the recent German metaphysicians, who have wilfully "walked in darkness" by borrowing the phraseology of Kant, and we are acquainted with no work in the whole round of the science, which a person of ordinary capacity may not understand, if he chooses. He will meet with many abstract and wearisome discussions, with very unattractive reading; but with little or nothing, that cannot easily be understood. This fact is stated in the most unequivocal terms by D'Alembert. "Every thing we learn from a good book on mental science is only a sort of reminiscence of what the mind previously knew. Accordingly, we may apply to good authors in this department what has been said of those who excel in the art of writing; that, in reading them, every one is apt to imagine, that he himself could have written in the same manner."

We are not sure, that the obscurity of Kant's writings has not been one great cause of their celebrity. The oracular utterances of the sage of Königsberg were eagerly caught up by a class of scholars, very numerous in Germany, whom no prospect of intellectual toil could appal, while their vanity was gratified by forming an esoteric school of philosophy, and possessing doctrines incomunicable to the world at large. No country was ever visited with such a plethora of learned industry. When the stores of ancient erudition were exhausted, and the Latin and Greek classics would bear no further commentary, when Oriental literature was thoroughly elucidated, and no difficulty in the Sanscrit and Japanese languages remained to be overcome, the crowd of philologists, critics, and commentators pounced with eagerness on a publication in their own land, which promised them an inexhaustible field of labor for all time to come. The stores of transcendental wisdom must be precious, indeed, when so many difficulties obstructed the attainment of them. Forthwith, dictionaries, manuals, refutations, replies, and rejoinders were multiplied without end. The number and loquacity of the initiated daily increased, all busily employed, and jabbering in a dialect, that astounded the common people, while it reduced the neophytes well-nigh to despair. A good-sized library might now be formed entirely of works written in

Kantianese, and devoted more or less directly to commenting on the “Critical Philosophy.”

We treat this matter lightly, though fully aware, that the extraordinary influence of Kant’s writings cannot be explained from the single cause above mentioned. In truth, through all the defects of his style and doctrine, we perceive the workings of no ordinary mind. Uniting great learning to a vigorous and comprehensive intellect, delighting in the boldest and most original speculations, and especially distinguished for a systematizing spirit, which gave a formal unity and entireness to the mass of his opinions, he stands high among the small band of men, whose works have given a new impulse and direction to science, and whose lives form the great turning points in the history of philosophy. Fully aware of the greatness of his proposed task and his own abilities, he put forward his claims with a freedom and decision, which in other men would have savoured of arrogance, but in him marked only the self-reliance of genius. Occupying a new position in speculative inquiry, he declared, that the method of his predecessors was fundamentally wrong, that their conclusions were unfounded and contradictory, and that his own theory was not merely the only safe, but the only possible, foundation for all future systems of metaphysics. To adopt his own language, “all metaphysicians are therefore solemnly and rightfully suspended from office, until they shall have satisfactorily answered the question,” on which, in his opinion, the possibility of their science depends. His own great work is not so much a new theory of the science itself, as an investigation of the grounds and nature of the problem proposed, and a scrutiny into the means and method to be adopted for its solution. All minds were naturally captivated by the boldness of pretension in these proposals. They felt the charms of a system, which promised to confute dogmatism on the one hand, and rebuke skepticism on the other, and to rescue the highest of all sciences from its previous uncertainties, waverings, and contradictions, and provide for it a sure method of future progress. The cumbersome apparatus, and the consequent tax on the patience of the learners, seemed pardonable, when they considered the difficulty of the problem and the magnitude of the end in view.

In any other country than Germany, the work would probably have fallen still-born from the press; for no one would

have had the courage to pierce through the tough and knotty envelope of the system, to ascertain how far it redeemed its magnificent promises. Even there, it was unnoticed for two years after its publication, and the bookseller was on the point of using the impression for waste paper, when the attention of the public was directed toward it by some articles in a leading journal, and the edition was eagerly bought up. From that time, its influence has been well-nigh unbounded. Some were attached to it, perhaps, from the very labor it had cost them to comprehend it, and because they were unwilling to confess, even to themselves, that they had lost their toil. Others, who were disgusted with the endless doubts, inconsistencies, and retrocessions of all former metaphysics, were attracted to this system by its formal and technical appearance and vast pretensions, which seemed to insure for the object of their pursuit a reality and stable foundation, like that enjoyed by the kindred sciences of logic and mathematics. Kant was thoroughly German in feeling and opinion, and his works were admirably well adapted to the national prejudices,—if we may call them such without offence,—and to the tendencies of the times. They fell in with the current of thought that marked the age, and their influence consequently was not confined to their proper subject, but covered the whole range of speculation,—not more apparent in metaphysics, than in morals, taste, and literary criticism. The nomenclature was widely adopted, and the spirit of the “Critical Philosophy” soon colored the whole web of German literature. And, when the prodigious literary activity of the nation began to attract the attention of foreigners, and the “Chinese wall,” which had isolated them from the rest of Europe, was broken down, the phenomenon of this man’s extraordinary power, so widely manifested, did not fail to excite curiosity in foreign countries. Madame de Staël, in her work, that may be said almost to have introduced the German literati to the European world, devoted several chapters to a brilliant, though superficial, consideration of the Kantian philosophy. Now that the people thus recently made known to us bid fair to affect French and English letters more widely and deeply than any foreign causes have done for ages, it becomes doubly important to gain correct notions of the philosophical theory, which is ingrained in their thoughts and language.

We have said, that much of the popularity of this system

at home was owing to its consonancy with the train of national opinions. We do not allude merely to the aliment, which its operose machinery afforded to the German appetite for toil. It was the state of religious opinions, with which the new philosophy harmonized in the greatest degree. More than fifty years ago, religious belief was dying out as rapidly in Germany as in France. Enthusiasm of faith had passed away with the theological wars, to which it had given rise. The Encyclopædists made converts to infidelity among the French, and Frederick of Prussia sought to extend their influence to his countrymen. He failed, because the characters of the two nations were so different, that the same course of argument and the same scheme of unbelief were not fitted for both. French skepticism, airy, shallow, and sensual, was not suited to the sobriety and thoughtfulness of the Germans. Equally or more prone than their neighbours to speculate on the highest topics, they could not do without a creed of some kind, but they wished for one of their own construction,—not dependent on revelation and the authority of Scripture, but worked out by their own minds,—curiously complex and elaborately wrought,—mystical in expression, though skeptical in tendency,—and more a subject of contemplation and argument, than belief. Their skepticism was to be arrayed in all the panoply of positive doctrine,—to be an elaborate scheme, not of doubt, but of absolute denial,—guarded by all the resources of reasoning, and appealing to the pride of human intellect, with all the pomp of demonstration and certainty.

Indeed, it is a curious fact, that peculiarities of national character are often more apparent in philosophical systems, than even in miscellaneous literature, matters of taste, forms of government, or domestic customs. Speculative theories result from the aggregate of character, and embody the whole mind of the people among whom they rise. From the extent and comparative vagueness of the subject, a greater scope is given for the expression of peculiar traits, which may appear either in the outward garb, the exterior accompaniment, of thought, or in the prevailing tendency of theories towards a certain point, or in the general fashion and arrangement of remark and argument. It is not that human nature, the great object of the study, differs in various countries, for the groundwork, of course, is everywhere the same. But it takes a different developement, has various and often

opposite tendencies, and produces very dissimilar results. We understand perfectly what is meant at the present day by the French, the German, and the English schools of philosophy; for no translation from the language of one into that of another can be so perfect as to obliterate all marks of origin. The wine will still have a tang of the cask. There is a vein of truth in the quaint saying, which gives to the English the dominion of the sea, to the French that of the earth, and to the Germans that of the clouds and the air. No matter whether Leibnitz, Kant, or Schelling be taken as the representative of the Teutonic race in speculation. There is a subtilty and over-refinement of thought, a boldness of hypothesis, an excessive display of learning, and haziness of expression, common to them all. Equally apparent in all the English school, in Hobbes, Locke, Hartley, and Reid, are plain common sense, sturdy resistance to all authority in matters of thought, and a disposition to espouse the popular belief, and to reconcile speculation with practice. France boasts of two great names, whose reputation belongs to the earlier period of her scientific history. But the life and situation of Descartes and Malebranche were in many respects peculiar. Individual influences operated upon them, to a great extent, to hide the qualities, which they had in common with their countrymen. The remarkable self-education of the former, his foreign travel and various experience of men, and the devotion of far the greater part of his life to physical science,—and the connexion of the latter with the priesthood, together with his enthusiastic religious faith,—prevented either from manifesting, in any great degree, the bias of national thought. Condillac is a far better representative of French philosophy. He has numerous points in common with those of his countrymen and successors, whose philosophical creed differs most widely from his own, and whose habits of thought even appear, at first sight, wholly unlike those of the great master of the Sensualist school. Cousin may be taken as an eminent instance. He is an Eclectic by profession. He has drunk deep at all fountains,—Greek, Scholastic, German, English,—mingling all the different waters for a single draught. Condillac, on the other hand, acknowledges no other master than Locke, and does not appear to have studied even him very faithfully. But he is not a more thorough Frenchman than the great Eclectic. He does not bring out

more strongly, more vividly, the national character. We find in the works of each the same transparency of diction united with real confusion of thought, the same dashing and brilliant, though shallow manner, generalizations equally bold and sweeping, and the same easy and confident tone of expression.

The writings of Kant gave utterance to the philosophical tendencies of his country and age, and the speculatists who succeeded him owe much of their success to a similar adoption of the prevailing sentiments of the thinking public into their respective systems. Under the guise of a new faith, they created a philosophy of unbelief; under a dogmatical mask, they proclaimed what was, at least in reference to revelation, a theory of total skepticism. This fact, though commonly admitted, so far as it relates to the opinions of Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, is denied in respect to the creator of the transcendental philosophy. But the denial only shows how imperfectly, out of the limits of his own country, his system is understood. The speculations of Hume, as he repeatedly admits, gave the first hint for the formation of his new scheme of belief; "they first interrupted my dogmatical slumber, and gave a wholly different direction to my inquiries in the field of speculative philosophy." Though commonly understood as aiming at the refutation of his predecessor, he extended, in fact, the sphere of Hume's skeptical arguments, generalizing them so far that they covered the whole field of knowledge.

"I first inquired, whether the objection of Hume might not be universal, and soon found, that the idea of the connexion between cause and effect is far from being the only one by which the understanding, *a priori*, thinks of the union of things; but rather, that metaphysics are entirely made up of such conceptions. I endeavoured to ascertain their number, and when, guided by a single principle, I had succeeded in the attempt, I proceeded to inquire into the objective validity of these ideas; for I was now more than ever convinced, that they were not drawn from experience, as Hume had supposed, but that they came from the pure understanding." — *Prolegomena zu einer jeden künftigen Metaphysik. Vorrede*, p. 13.

That this expansion of Hume's principles, though conducted on a different method, leads to the same skeptical conclusions that he deduced from them, will be more clearly

seen in the developement of the theory. The impression, that it led to very different results, is founded on the arrogant pretensions of the new school, and the difficulty of analyzing the system far enough to detect its real character. The name of Transcendentalism seems to imply, that it is the scheme of a higher philosophy, rising above the objects of sense, and over-leaping the narrow limits within which the exercise of our faculties had formerly been confined ; when, in fact, its leading doctrine is, that our knowledge is necessarily restricted to objects within the domain of experience, — that all super-sensual ideas are to us characterless and devoid of meaning, and in attempting to *cognize* them the reason is involved in endless contradictions. We do not state this fact as in itself a reproach upon the speculations of Kant, but only to correct the unfounded notions, which most persons among us entertain, of their character and tendency. All innovations in the theory of science, all new views in philosophy, must stand or fall on their logical and intrinsic merits. There may be a presumption against them from the degrading conception which they offer of human nature ; but this is insufficient to justify their immediate rejection. Of two hypotheses, the more ennobling is not necessarily the true one, and too great advantage is given to the skeptic, by a hasty preference awarded to it, before the grounds on which it rests are satisfactorily determined. Our business is with argument, and not with declamation.

We obtain a clue to the labyrinth of Kantian metaphysics, as soon as we rightly perceive the point of departure selected for the system, and the new method on which he resolved to prosecute his inquiries. The three sciences, logic, mathematics, and metaphysics, distinguished from others by their purely intellectual origin and nature, have advanced with very unequal success. The first came nearly in a perfect form from the hands of its inventor, Aristotle, subsequent inquirers having done little but to pare off its redundancies and improve the modes of its application. The second, rising from small beginnings, has gone steadily on, every step being one of progress, till it now covers an immense domain, while we can hardly imagine any bounds to its future advancement. But the fate of the third of these sciences has been directly the reverse. Though older than the others, it has, from the earliest period of its history, presented little more than an

arena for endless contests, where philosophers might exercise their powers in mock engagements, but where no one could ever gain the least ground, or found a permanent possession upon his victory. For all this ill success, Kant supposed that the method of inquiry was in fault. On the old plan, it was presumed, that sensible things, outward objects, were known to us in all their relations ; — that the nature of mind was unknown, and must be studied through the effects produced within it by impressions from without. Kant reversed this process, and from the centre of the mind itself observed the action of our *cognitive* faculties on surrounding things. He looked upon the outward world as modified by our own mental constitution, and upon the mind as projecting, so to speak, its own modes of being upon the external creation. “ It sounds strange indeed, at first, but it is not the less certain, when I say, in respect to the original laws of the understanding, that it does not derive them from nature, but imposes them upon nature.” From effecting this change in the mode of inquiry, he compares himself to Copernicus, who, when he found that he could not explain the motions of the heavenly bodies by supposing the firmament to turn round the spectator, tried the opposite supposition, by leaving the spectator to turn, and the stars to be at rest.

The obvious consequence of this hypothesis is, that all our knowledge is subjective, that we can never know things as they are, but only as they appear to us when viewed through a false and deceptive medium. There is a deep gulf between the two sciences of psychology and ontology, and no human efforts can bridge over the chasm. Though the problem which Kant proposes should be solved, — though by a finer analysis we should separate the qualities really belonging to an object from those superadded by our manner of looking at it, — still we could never imagine how it would appear to us, if deprived of these subjective elements. Now our idea of truth is, the conformity of our representations with their archetypes ; and, as confidence in our perceptive faculties is the only way of assuring ourselves that such coincidence exists, the theory in question is certainly based on the most comprehensive skepticism. It declares, that truth is not only unattained, but unattainable. It assumes, that the world which we know, is a web spun by our own fancies on few and thin filaments of absolute being ; take away the imaginary warp,

and the texture cannot hold together. The world of things in themselves is incognizable and inconceivable.

“—We receive but what we give,  
And in our life alone does Nature live,  
Ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud.”

By a full survey of the cognitive faculty of man, Kant sought to ascertain the number and character of those primitive elements of thought, which, being united with, or imposed upon, the impressions received from sense, constitute knowledge, or make experience possible. In this way he sought to finish the work commenced by Locke,—to discover the grounds and origin of human knowledge, and thence to deduce the conditions of its use, and to determine its extent and boundaries. Perhaps we may gain more accurate notions of the execution of this task, by going back for a time to the theory of his predecessor.

The change of a preposition is sufficient to reconcile the leading doctrine of Locke with the opinions of those philosophers, who have most distinguished themselves by the virulence of their attacks upon his system. The proposition, as he states it, that all our knowledge proceeds *from* sensation and reflection, as it implies that we are not to go behind these faculties in accounting for its origin, is faulty in itself, and at variance with his subsequent assertions. Had he asserted, that all truth is perceived *through* these faculties, or first known on occasion of their exercise, he would not merely have avoided misapprehensions and unfounded complaints, but have stated an undeniable fact, which not the most illiberal of his opponents could ever dream of controverting. The two worlds of matter and mind are the only possible objects of human cognition. We can know the one only through the functions of sense, and the other through the exercise of that faculty,—call it reflection, consciousness, or what you please,—by which we cognize objects of pure thought, or the immaterial creation.

But if we merely trace a given idea to sensation or reflection, we leave the matter short; we have not fully accounted for its origin. An impression is made on the senses, and a perception of the understanding immediately follows. Is there not an element in it, which is purely intellectual, and as such not *caused* by the action on the nerves, though this action may mark the *occasion*, on which it rises? The eye

gives us a perception of distance, though the impression on the optic nerve certainly transmits to the mind nothing but a sensation of various colors. The judgment immediately adds an estimate of the distance, at which the visible object is placed; and does this, from long practice, with such facility and quickness, that we confound the act with the sensation, and imagine that we *see* the separation of bodies in space. Thus we falsely attribute to the sensation more knowledge than really proceeds from it. Still, this is an instance not of original mental action, but of an acquired perception, founded on habit, and as such is noticed by Locke, as perfectly consistent with his hypothesis. But are there not other instances, where the tendency to add something to the sensible impression is original, instinctive, and acts with irresistible force; and where the addition made, or the subjective element as the Germans call it, is wholly unlike any quality existing in the outward thing, and can in no way be traced to its influence?

To answer this question, we take an example most familiar to metaphysicians. Two events happen in close connexion, and we immediately connect them by the supposed relation of cause and effect. The hand is held near the fire, and the sensation of pain follows. Heat is abstracted from water, and the fluid immediately congeals. Certain solid substances are thrown into water, and they straightway dissolve, the fluid remaining transparent as ever; other substances in powder are thrown in, the medium remains turbid for a time, and then the foreign matter sinks unchanged to the bottom. Now, in each of these cases, we immediately and necessarily suppose, that the first event is an efficient agent, and of its own power or force produces the second. But the senses tell us nothing of such a connexion. They only inform us of the two events themselves, and that they are contiguous in place and time. Nor can the judgment be attributed to reasoning, or a power of tracing the relations between ideas. For what resemblance is there between the ideas of heat and pain, between those of cold and solidity, between pounded sugar and transparency in water, or pounded alabaster and insolubility? None at all. Naturally and easily as we make the transition now from one of these related ideas to the other, had we no previous experience,—had we never seen the experiment or heard of its being tried,—we should no more have thought of connecting the two notions, than of tracing

an analogy between a thing a yard long and one that is red. The two ideas are wholly dissimilar.

The whole matter may be summed up as follows ; that, having sensible evidence of two events happening in direct succession, we immediately connect with them the idea of power, or efficient agency. Whence comes this idea ? Certainly not from sensation. We do not perceive the power of fire to melt lead or consume paper, just as we perceive its light and the flickering of its flame, merely by looking at it. We perceive the fact, indeed, that the lead is melted and the paper is dissipated ; but the supposition, that the fire causes this result, goes beyond the perception, is extraneous to it, and, so far as the senses are concerned, is entirely gratuitous. Does it come from reflection then ? This faculty denotes nothing but attention to the subjects of our consciousness, and we surely are not conscious of the powers of material things. Consciousness informs us, indeed, that the idea exists in the mind, but tells us nothing about its origin ; nor can we trace any intellectual process, or train of thought, which seems to end in giving birth to this notion. The idea of power, therefore, is a fair instance of an element of knowledge, in itself universal and of primary importance, the origin of which cannot be ascribed either to external or internal experience.

Now, this instinctive yoking together of two events as cause and effect, or rather the universal judgment closely related to it, "that every thing, which happens must have a cause," is termed, in the elegant language of Kant, "a synthetical judgment *a priori*." Propositions are called analytical or synthetical, according as they are either merely explanatory, and add nothing to the sum of our knowledge, or as they have an amplifying effect, and actually enlarge the given cognition. In other words, the predicate of an analytical judgment affirms nothing but what was already contained in the idea of the subject. This is the nature of a complete or partial definition. Facts which we learn from experience are instances of synthetical judgments, the predicate going beyond the subject, and thus making a positive addition to our stock of previous knowledge. The proposition we have been considering at such length is evidently synthetical, for there is nothing in the very conception or idea of one event to create a necessity of its being preceded or followed by another of a different character. It is also called a judgment

*a priori*, because, as we have seen, it is not, and it cannot be, derived from experience. Then what is its real origin? How do we obtain it? This is Hume's problem. Make the question universal, state it in the broadest possible form, and we have the great problem of the transcendental philosophy ; “How are synthetical judgments *a priori* possible?” The expression is not remarkable for perspicuity, but the meaning is this ; How is it, that, independent of experience, we are able to know any thing with absolute certainty? To the consideration of this question, the “Critique of Pure Reason” is exclusively devoted.

We first seek for a criterion, by which we may securely distinguish *a priori* knowledge from that which is founded on experience. Kant finds such a test in the characteristics of universality and strict necessity, neither of which can be attached to any propositions of empirical origin. Human experience is never complete,—never exhausts the possible variety of cases; its judgments, therefore, are never universally true or demonstratively certain; but, founded on an inductive process, they are valid so far as our observation has extended. The contrary is always possible and conceivable. Not so with all the propositions of mathematics, with some axioms in physics, and with many other truths, that are implied in all the forms of speculative knowledge. These carry their own evidence along with them, the denial of them involving a contradiction or absurdity, and no case being supposable where absolute and universal certainty would fail to attend them. Therefore they are not derived from experience, and the question recurs with regard to their origin, Whence does the mind obtain them?

Kant defies the world to give any other answer to this query, than that which we have already stated as the foundation of his system ;—that they are forms of the mind itself,—the colored medium through which we look out upon the universe of cognizable things. The material world is deaf and dumb to such truths. The mind does not derive them from without, but from its own stores, and by its own inborn energy imposes them as necessary and immutable laws upon the outward universe. Our perceptive faculties have a peculiar organization, and can act only within well-defined limits. Therefore we know *a priori*, that the information received through the senses must conform to this

organization, and receive certain changes from the passages, through which it is transmitted. In what manner objects would appear to beings of a different constitution and nature from ourselves, we cannot even conjecture. But we know how they *must* appear to us, and therefore, prior to experience, we can determine some particulars in relation to them with absolute certainty. To inquire into the actual constitution of things, — their real nature, as distinct from the *appearances* which they assume to us or to different orders of being, — is a hopeless endeavour. It is seeking to know, without using the only means of knowledge. It is a gross error, though a natural one, to consider our own modes of knowing as the modes of being inherent in outward things ; to give objective validity to subjective laws.

The theory is certainly ingenious and plausible, though it rests on a paradox. Empirical propositions, to which we give only a limited *comprehension* and a qualified assent, are not controverted. Universal and absolute convictions, in the reference which we instinctively make of them, are necessarily false. The non-existence of qualities is inferred from our inability to conceive of their non-existence ; they belong only to the mind, because we cannot even imagine their annihilation as attributes of things without us. Without questioning the reality of any “anticipated” knowledge, we inquire only into the sufficiency of those criteria, by which Kant seeks to distinguish it from truths empirically known. That in the information received through the action of the perceptive faculties there are some elements, which are necessary, or that cannot be got rid of, is a fact which betrays rather the limitation of our capacities, than the existence of a different and higher source of knowledge. The *necessity* in question may be only of a negative character, and then the truth which it characterizes may be of empirical origin. Some objects can be known only under certain relations ; some qualities cannot, in our conceptions, be abstracted from the substance in which they inhere. Enlarged means of experience, — the possession of an additional sense, for instance, — might do away with these impossibilities. The necessary character of the cognitions in such case, results rather from the limitations of experience, than from the existence of a higher faculty of knowing.

But without insisting on the insufficiency of these tests,

we remark further a monstrous gap in the reasoning adopted by Kant. From the necessary and universal recognition of an object or quality, he infers, that it cannot be objectively real. Thus he assumes, not merely that experience can lead us only to contingent, limited, and relative knowledge, but that it is the only trustworthy means of cognition. Whatever is known *a priori*, on his system, must be illusive ; it is subjective, or derived only from our own modes of being and knowing, though always falsely referred to things as they exist. In this way it is maintained, without the slightest proof, and in contradiction to an irresistible impulse of belief, that there is no harmony between our laws of thought and the real constitution of objects. The consciousness of necessity, which accompanies certain judgments, is held to prove their origin *a priori* ; and from this last fact is inferred their entire want of foundation in the absolute nature of things. We may admit the justice of the first inference, but wholly deny that of the second, which would be more properly styled a mere conjecture. For the whole course of Kant's arguments leads to the conclusion, that, from the constitution of a something in our conceptions, we are not entitled to form any belief respecting the constitution of that something without us. Yet, in direct opposition to this canon, from the *a priori* origin of our knowledge of a quality, he deduces the non-existence of that quality in the outward world. That is, he admits the rule, when it works in favor of his system, but repudiates it, when it makes against him. It is a good principle, when it leads to skepticism ; it is invalid, when it tends to restore confidence in the fidelity of our representative ideas.

Few words will suffice to apply these principles of the Transcendental philosophy to an explanation of the intellectual processes in the acquisition of knowledge. It is apparent from what has already been said, that each cognitive faculty has two functions ; — the one, *receptivity*, or the power of receiving impressions from without, the other, *spontaneity*, or the power of reacting upon and modifying these impressions. The first of these faculties, that of sense (*sinnlichkeit*), in which spontaneity exists in the lowest degree, furnishes *intuitions*, — the rude and unformed *matter* of all our knowledge. Two intuitions, those of space and time, are found to possess the marks of universality and necessity, and therefore have an *a priori* origin, and no objective reality,

or foundation in the real nature of things. Space is no empirical conception, derived from external experience, but the necessary prerequisite, or condition, of our ability to imagine any thing as existing out of our own minds. If from our conception of a material substance, we abstract every thing which is known empirically, as its color, hardness, weight, impenetrability, &c., still the space remains, which the body had occupied, as something that cannot be left out. We can imagine a void space, or one in which no substance is to be found, but we can form no idea of body as existing otherwise than in space. Again, space is an endless magnitude, no limits to it being conceivable; and it is essentially *one*, for though we may speak of different spaces, we understand thereby only parts of one and the same all-comprehending extension. Similar arguments will be found to be applicable to our idea of time. On the subjective character of these two intuitions depends the possibility of the whole science of mathematics; our absolute conviction of geometrical truths resting on the pure representation of space, while arithmetic derives its certainty from the "anticipated" idea of time.

We certainly have neither time nor space to consider the argument more particularly, but only to inquire, how far the theory, as thus explained, tends to the refutation of skepticism. To the first bewildered apprehensions of the student, it would seem to be difficult to frame a system, which should strike more effectually at the foundations of all belief. By denying the reality of space, "the great globe itself, with all that it inherit," passes away like a dream. By asserting that time does not exist out of our own fancies, memory appears a cheat, existence is contracted to a point, and the whole history of experience and events is rolled up like the morning mist.

"Nothing is there *to come*, and nothing *past*;  
But an eternal now does ever last."

To assert, that these laws of thought have a subjective reality, sufficient for our purposes, and are rightly applicable to the phenomenal world,—the only one with which we are acquainted or have any concern,—is a contemptible evasion. The most audacious skeptic never denied, that we *believe* in the existence of matter and in the succession of events in time, or that this belief is imperative and necessary. At the same time, he maintains that it is illusive, and has no founda-

tion in the real nature of things. To go farther than this, would be the part, not of an infidel, but of a madman. It is true, that Kant professes to repudiate Berkleyanism, and will not admit that his own system leads to any similar result. He maintains the existence of the outward world, though he denies the reality of that which, by his own principles, can alone make the conception of such existence possible. The originality, at least, of a system, that couples the refutation of idealism with a denial of the *objectivity* of space, cannot be disputed. External nature has a being independent of our ideas, though the manner of that being transcends the limits of all thought. Kant contented himself at first with a simple protest against the ideal theory ; but, when his opponents charged him with denying in words what was an unavoidable inference from his own system, in the *second edition* of the "Critique" he inserted a proof of the existence of matter. Of the validity of this proof, we say nothing, for we do not profess to understand it, and have great doubts whether the author understood it himself. It is an excrescence on the system, violating its unity, and contradicting what must be inferred from his doctrines as a whole.

The intuitions of sense form the groundwork of our cognitions, but in themselves are unformed and incomplete. Before they constitute knowledge, they must become objects of thought to the understanding, a faculty distinguished from that of sense, as its operations are independent of space and time. The latter represents the matter of things, as it is affected by them ; the former, exercising spontaneity in a higher degree, collects the variety of these materials into a whole. What the intuitions of space and time are to the functions of sense, the categories are to the understanding. They are forms of thought, under which intuitions are necessarily *taken in*, or *subsumed*, and thereby become *conceptions*, the legitimate products of the understanding. They are twelve in number, divided into four equal classes ; those of quantity, quality, relation, and modality. The nomenclature is obviously borrowed from that of the logician, and thus indicates the source of the theory, and the grounds on which it rests. Kant was early struck with the similarity between the first principles of logic and the necessary laws, to which, in an ontological point of view, all the objects of our perceptions appear to be subjected. Might not the similarity of appearance be founded

on the radical identity of the two classes ? Every act of reasoning, considered abstractly, takes place under certain forms or laws, which have undoubted authority, and the number and reality of which may be determined with the utmost precision. Might not these forms be identical with the laws, which we fancy are drawn from the observation of nature, but which, on this hypothesis, must be considered as imposed on nature by our own intellectual activity ? Kant answers this question in the affirmative, and, having remodelled and completed to his own satisfaction the table of categories, claims to have resolved by their means the problem respecting the possibility of *a priori* knowledge in the department of physics. To every conception or judgment that forms a part of our knowledge are applied at least four categories, taken respectively from the four classes into which these forms of thought have been divided. In other words, we must think of the object, in the first place, as being either *one, many, or all*; secondly, as *positive, negative, or limited*; thirdly, as *substance or accident, cause or effect*, or as placed in *reciprocity* with something else by the law of *action and reaction*; finally, as *possible or impossible, existent or non-existent, necessary or contingent*.

The categories are necessary conditions of thinking upon any object, but in themselves they do not enable us to know the object. To accomplish this purpose, real intuitions must be given, to which the categories may be referred; and since all intuitions come from sense, the office of the understanding extends only to sensible things. Beyond the operations of the senses, or the territory of experience, nothing is cognizable. This remark applies even to our own nature. Pure consciousness gives us assurance, that we exist; but, since there is no intuition of this fact, and it is thought upon only by the spontaneity of the understanding, so our own being cannot be known in itself, but only the manner of that being. Empirical consciousness of changes in our internal condition must be distinguished from pure consciousness of self-existence. Universally, therefore, the functions of the understanding are empirical, and not transcendental; they refer to objects as phenomena, and not as things in themselves.

Notwithstanding this necessary limitation of our capacities to a knowledge of objects within the domain of experience, the mind constantly strives to rise above the sphere of the senses,

and, as in the metaphysical systems of the older philosophy, fashions for itself a science of things in themselves, which are supersensual and unconditioned. An analysis of our intellectual faculties is incomplete, if it does not account for this effort, if it does not develope some deep-seated cause, which constantly impels us to a search after what is absolute and unlimited, and gives to the supposed knowledge of it a deceptive appearance of validity. Kant finds such a cause in the third cognitive faculty of man, denominated *par excellence* the Reason,—spontaneity raised to the highest degree,—the chief function of which is to support this unceasing but vain endeavour. As the power of sense has its forms, and the understanding its categories, so the reason has its *ideas*, created by adding to conceptions elaborated by the next lower faculty a notion of the infinite and the absolute. They are three in number; the idea of the absolute unity of the thinking subject, which is the aim of rational psychology; the idea of the absolute totality of phenomena, the universe, which forms the purpose of rational cosmology; finally, the idea of absolute reality, the highest *condition* of all things, the first cause, which is the object of rational theology. In other words, by a necessary impulse of our nature we must *assume* the unity of the soul, the existence of the universe, and the reality of a first cause. But these ideas enter not the field of positive knowledge. They constitute the possibility of metaphysics as an idea, but not as actual science. No proof of their objective validity can be furnished, for it is their essence not to be referred to corresponding objects cognizable through sense; they are derived subjectively from the reason. Yet they are not wholly without use, as they answer at least a regulative purpose. They urge our empirical inquiries onward to higher and nobler ends, than would otherwise be pursued; and, though the objects themselves are unattainable, the effort serves to give greater comparative unity and completeness to our system of knowledge.

The result of the theory may be given in Kant's own words. "All knowledge of things derived solely from the pure understanding, or from pure reason, is nothing but empty show; and truth is to be found only through experience." He expressly denies the validity of the *a priori* argument for the freedom of the will, the immortality of the soul, and the existence of a God; and rebukes the arrogance of the schools

for assuming to themselves higher grounds of conviction than are open to the vulgar. His aim is, not merely to show the futility of the proofs already advanced in support of these great doctrines, but to demonstrate the absolute impracticability of the attempt to establish them under any circumstances. The reason may and will exhaust itself by perpetual efforts to transcend the limits of possible inquiry,—erecting systems and almost in the same breath pulling them down again ; because urged on by an irresistible impulse, that prevents it from being taught wisdom by repeated failures, and from acknowledging that it has overtaken its powers and mistaken its prerogatives. The arguments relating to these sublime doctrines are summed up on either side, and found to be equally irrefutable, and therefore equally false. Then it is vain to argue either for or against them ; the supporter and the assailant alike are silenced.

Such a result of metaphysical inquiry as this, reminds one of Madame de Staël's remark on former skeptical systems ; that “ they changed the light of knowledge into a devouring flame ; and Philosophy, like an enraged magician, fired the palace on which she had lavished all the prodigies of her skill.” It should be observed, however, that Kant himself, alarmed by the sweeping skepticism of these conclusions, in his “ Critique of Practical Reason,” subsequently published, labors to do away with his own work, and to find in our moral nature what the speculative reason cannot afford,—a foundation for the belief in things unseen and eternal. The attempt forms a virtual acknowledgment of the necessity of those doctrines, which he had previously refused to legitimate ; they are introduced into the field of ethics as postulates, without which moral phenomena remain inexplicable.

Our outline of this celebrated system is necessarily very imperfect, but it may serve to correct some unsound notions of its character and tendency. The authority of Kant as a teacher of opinions, even in his native country, has passed away ; and the result has come far short of justifying his boast, that he had given a new and sure basis to mental science, and fixed the principles and method of its progress. Speculation has broken the trammels, with which he would have limited its aberrations, and has pursued a course more erratic than ever. Opinions have varied as widely in the mass, and fluctuated as rapidly in the individual, as if he had

never determined "the only possible method" of avoiding hesitancy and confusion, and placing metaphysics on the same stable foundation with the other abstract sciences. But the indirect influences of his writings may be distinctly traced in the works of nearly all the speculatists, who have succeeded him, not only in Germany, but in France and England. While his innovations in the nomenclature have changed the whole garb of philosophy, and rendered the study of systems more abstruse, fatiguing, and repulsive, it must be confessed, that they have also removed some causes of ambiguity and mistake, and have pointed out the path for effecting a more systematic and beneficial reform. His example has also given a fresher impulse to the spirit of inquiry, increased the eagerness for the formation of new systems, and carried boldness of theorizing on all topics far beyond its ancient limits. His great demerit consists, in having effectually, though perhaps not intentionally, served the cause of infidelity, while professing to repair and extend the defences of belief. Had the real character of his doctrines been evident at a glance, their influence, whether for good or evil, could not have reached so far. But his disciples groped about in the intricacies of a system, which they could not fully master, and embraced opinions, of the nature and tendency of which they had but a blind conception. Thus, they were fairly enlisted on the side of skepticism, before they had thought of quitting the banners of faith. Once engaged in the work, they felt only the desire of surpassing their instructor in dogmatism of manner, rashness in forming novel hypotheses, and general license of speculation on the most sacred subjects. As his theory extended over the whole territory of knowledge, almost every science has in turn been infected with the wild and crude imaginings of his followers. It is this general effervescence of thought and reasoning, which has brought a reproach on the very name of philosophy, and, through the mournful perversion of terms which it has occasioned, has given too good cause for regarding a system of philosophical radicalism as a mere cover for an attack on all the principles of government and social order, and for considering a philosophical religion as atheism itself. Under such circumstances, we can hardly wonder, that many reflecting persons have conceived a distrust of the consequences of such free inquiry, and do not suppress either alarm or contempt at the bare mention of German metaphysics.